DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 938 PS 018 109

AUTHOR Nelson-LeGall, Sharon
TITLE Academic Achievement Orientation and Help-Seeking Behavior in Preadolescent Girls.
SPONS AGENCY Foundation for Child Development, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE 6 Jul 89
NOTE 17p.; An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Society (Alexandria, VA, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Coping; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; *Females; Grade 4; Grade 6; *Help Seeking; Individual Differences; Problem Solving
IDENTIFIERS *Mastery Orientation

ABSTRACT

This study examined help-seeking and achievement behavior in elementary shool girls in a problem-solving situation. Classified as high or low in mastery orientation on the basis of their scores on a subset of items on the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Scale, 40 fourth and sixth grade girls participated in the study. Children's task persistence and help-seeking behaviors were observed while they performed a perceptual/performance cognitive task. The frequency of behaviors that reflected adaptive and unadaptive bids for help was recorded. Results of the study indicated that task persistence measured as the length of time spent working on the task did not vary with grade level or mastery orientation. As predicted, help-seeking behaviors were found to vary with mastery orientation. Girls high in mastery orientation displayed proportionately more adaptive bids for help that focused on solving the task than did their low mastery counterparts. Also as predicted, girls high in mastery orientation viewed help-seeking more favorably as an alternative means of goal-attainment than did low mastery-oriented girls. Results are discussed in terms of individual differences in strategies for coping with stress in achievement settings, and their implications for the assessment of adaptive help-seeking behavior are outlined. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED308938

6 July 1989

Academic Achievement Orientation and Help-Seeking Behavior in Preadolescent Girls

Sharon Nelson-Le Gall

University of Pittsburgh

Descriptors: Help-seeking, Achievement, Motivation

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sharon Nelson-LeGall
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 018109

Running Head: Help-Seeking Behavior of Preadolescent Girls

This research was partially supported by a grant from the Young Scholars in Social and Affective Development Program of the Foundation for Child Development. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the meeting of American Psychological Society, Alexandria, VA, 1989. The author wishes to thank the students, staff, and faculty of participating schools for their cooperation. Requests for reprints should be sent to Sharon A. Nelson-Le Gall, 829 Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, 3939 O'Hara Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

The present study examined help seeking and achievement behavior in elementary school girls in a problem-solving situation. Forty fourth and sixth grade girls, classified as high or low mastery-oriented on the basis of their scores on a subset of items on the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Scale, participated as subjects. Children's task persistence and help-seeking behaviors were observed while they performed a perceptual/performance cognitive task. The frequency of behaviors that reflected adaptive and unadaptive bids for help was recorded. Results of the study indicated that task persistence measured as the length of time spent working the task did not vary with grade level or mastery orientation. As predicted, help-seeking behaviors were found to vary with mastery orientation such that girls high in mastery orientation displayed proportionately more adaptive bids for help that focused on solving the task than did their low mastery counterparts. Also as predicted, girls high in mastery orientation viewed help seeking more favorably as an alternative means of goal-attainment than did low mastery oriented girls. The results are discussed in terms of individual differences in strategies for coping with stress in achievement settings, and their implications for the assessment of adaptive help-seeking behavior are outlined.

Academic Achievement Orientation and Help-Seeking Behavior in Preadolescent Girls

The traditional conceptualization of help seeking as dependency behavior has led to the view that help seeking is normative behavior for females in western societies (Deaux, 1976; McMullen & Gross, 1983). Most of the research investigating help seeking in children within this framework has involved comparisons of the behavior of boys and girls in problem-solving situations (e.g., Bottinelli & Weizmann, 1973; Fischer & Torney, 1976). This gender comparative focus, however, is not adequate to elucidate fully the nature of females' help-seeking behavior in achievement settings because it ignores individual differences among females in other factors that may influence help-seeking attitudes and behaviors.

Individual differences in achievement orientation are important influences of children's responses to academic difficulties. Several researchers (e.g., Ames, 1983; Dweck & Elliott, 1983; Nicholls, 1984) have posited that individual differences in the goals pursued in achievement situations can influence expectancies of success, actual task behaviors, and evaluation of task outcomes as well. For example, Dweck and colleagues have distinguished two groups of children who appear to differ in their tendencies to pursue learning versus performance goals. Mastery-oriented children tend to be characterized by learning goals such that when faced with obstacles to achievement they are likely to focus on the task and attempt to generate alternative strategies and garner resources for problem solving both internal and external to themselves. In contrast, helpless children are thought to pursue performance goals in achievement situations and when faced with task difficulties tend to focus on their perceived lack of ability and resort to ineffectual strategies, including abandoning the task if possible.

Identification of mastery-oriented and helpless children has usually relied on assessment of children's causal attributions for failure (Diener & Dweck, 1978). Mastery-orientation has thus been defined as the tendency to attribute failure to internal and unstable cause, that is, to a lack of personal effort. In contrast, a helpless orientation has been defined as the tendency to attribute failure to causes that are regarded as internal and stable such as a lack of general ability, or to causes external to the child such as interference from others and unfair evaluation agents. These variations in attributions have been found to be associated with different achievement goals, which in turn predict variations in achievement behaviors such as task choice and persistence, as well as actual task behaviors.

Task persistence has been extensively investigated as the dependent variable in studies assessing the

effects of mastery versus helpless orientation. Persistence has traditionally been operationalized as the length of time spent trying to solve a problem without help (e.g., Andrews & Debus, 1978; Feather, 1963). Such behavior, however, may reveal more about the individual's value for independence than about his or her value for task mastery. Whereas task mastery provides its own feedback and rewards that promote learning, independence does not necessarily promote learning because it may or may not involve task mastery. Children may continue to work at a task without help, in spite of prolonged lack of success and the availability of more productive alternative strategies, in order to forestall judgments of failure (Diener & Dweck, 1978). In these cases, children may inappropriately be regarded as highly achievement-oriented because they have spent a long time working on the task. Length of time on task may not be as sensitive an indicator of achievement as some measure of whether the time was spent in active pursuit of a solution.

A potentially useful and efficient alternative strategy that could be used by a child who desires to master a difficult task is to seek help. Seeking help can be treated as an act of effort in that the child seeking help is actively using available resources to increase the probability of future success. The classification of help seeking as a learning strategy is particularly appropriate in those instances in which the help requested is focused on acquiring the processes of problem solution and is limited to the amount and type needed to allow children to acquire new skills, master current skills, or solve problems in the future for themselves (e.g., Ames, 1983; Nelson-Le Gall, 1981). This point of view, which treats such acts of help seeking as relevant and instrumental to achievement, is in sharp contrast to that underlying studies of achievement motivation in which help seeking is considered to be the antithesis of achievement behavior (e.g., Winterbottom, 1958). When the conceptual links between independence, task mastery, and achievement are fully considered, it becomes evident that the link between help seeking and achievement conceived of as task mastery, rather than simply as task independence, has not been adequately explored.

The present research sought to determine whether girls' level of mastery orientation influenced their display of help-seeking behavior in a problem-solving situation. The study provided for observations of children's task performance and help seeking in a controlled laboratory setting and related these behaviors to attributional measures of mastery orientation. Because level of mastery orientation was likely to be associated with school achievement outcomes, and because low and high achievement could be associated with extreme characteristics on a constellation of psychosocial factors that were beyond

the scope of this research, the present study was limited in focus to average achieving students. Also, much of the research equating girls' help-seeking behavior with dependency and weak achievement orientations has focused on the preschool and early childhood period. However, several recent developmental examinations of help-seeking behavior in childhood (e.g., Nelson-Le Gall, 1987; Nelson-Le Gall & Jones, 1989; Oppenheimer & Heller, 1984) have reported an increase in the instrumental use of help seeking as an alternative problem-solving strategy from preschool up to early adolescence. Therefore, girls in late childhood and in early adolescence were studied in order to broaden the knowledge base on this topic.

It was predicted that mere length of time working would not vary with grade level or mastery orientation. Help-seeking requests as well as attitudes toward seeking help as a means of coping with task difficulty, however, were expected to vary with both grade level and mastery orientation. Certain features of request have been shown to be important for their effectiveness in the context of learning discourse. Specifically, requests that are direct, sincere, designate the listener(s), and refer to the task activity at hand tend to be effective in producing the desired response, and are associated with higher task achievement in school age children (e.g., Cooper & Cooper, 1984; Peterson, Wilkinson, Spinelli, & Swing, 1984). It was predicted that older girls would make more bids for help that were explicitly focused on overcoming perceived obstacles to task solution, such as requesting additional information and resources, as compared to younger girls. Girls high in mastery orientation were expected to make proportionately more specific verbal requests for information, intervention, that would indicate a focus on solving the task than were girls low in mastery orientation. In contrast, girls low in mastery orientation were expected to make proportionately more nonspecific bids for help that would indicate a concern over displaying personal inadequacies. Finally, high mastery oriented girls were expected to view help-seeking more favorably as a means of coping with task difficulty than were low mastery oriented girls.

Method

Subjects

The subjects in this study were 20 fourth grade (mean CA=9.9, range=9-6 to 10-7) and 20 sixth grade (mean CA=12.2, range=11-7 to 12-5) girls. The girls were identified as being of average academic achievement based upon school records of current achievement test scores and teachers' reports of their classroom performance. These subjects were drawn from fourth and sixth grade classrooms in two local parochial schools. The sample was predominantly of white (all but 4 children) and all children in the

sample were from middle class backgrounds by school administrators' report. Written parental consent was obtained for all participating children.

A subset of 10 questions from the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility (IAR) Scale (Crandall, Katkovsky, & Crandall, 1965) was group administered to the subjects. This subset specifically taps the child's attribution of failure to lack of effort and has been used by researchers studying achievement motivation to identify mastery-orientation in children (e.g., Diener & Dweck, 1978). Preliminary analysis of children's mean scores on these ten items indicated no significant differences by grade. Using the sample mean score (6.85) as the cutpoint, children with scores of 7 or higher were classified as high in mastery orientation, and those with scores below 7 were classified as low in mastery orientation for the purposes of data analyses. Subjects were equally distributed across mastery groups. The mean scores on the IAR measure for the low and high groups were 5.25 and 8.45, respectively.

Materials

Several block designs from the Kohs Block Design Test (Kohs, 1923) were used as stimuli to assess children's task persistence and spontaneous help-seeking behavior in the laboratory setting. The pretesting of block designs allowed the selection of practice designs that subjects could perform successfully without assistance. The specific test design used was chosen so that it would be of a difficulty level beyond the ability level of average achieving children.

Procedure

All data for this study were collected in the spring of the school year. For the experimental sessions one white male and one white female adult were present at all times. This allowed children to choose a male or female helper. Both adults, who served as experimenters, were blind to children's IAR scores. Children were escorted from their classrooms to the experimental room by the first experimenter(E 1). Before entering the room, E 1 spent some time talking casually to the child to show general interest in the child and to put the child at ease. E 1 also explained to the child that in the room, the child would meet another adult who had a puzzle game for children to try out. E 1 then introduced the child to the second experimenter (E 2) who administered the block-design task. Assignment of adults to the role of E 1 and E 2 was counterbalanced within each grade level.

The child's performance on the test block design was videotaped for later analysis. The video equipment was hidden from the child's view by a large folding panel from which geometric shapes had been randomly cut out and replaced by cellophane of different colors. The camera lens was positioned

behind an appropriately-sized colorless circle to allow unobstructed filming of the subject and the task area. The child was seated at a small table, the block design task was explained by E 2, and the child was then allowed to inspect the blocks. In order to give each child an equivalent amount of successful practice experience with the task, subjects were first presented with three very simple 4-block designs that had been identified as such in the pretesting of block designs. After completing the practice designs, the child was informed that the next puzzle would require all the blocks. E 2 then placed all 16 blocks on the table, presented the puzzle card and withdrew from the child's workspace. At this point, both adults were seated at opposite ends of a table positioned next to the table where the child sat.

Each child was allotted 10 minutes in which to work the puzzle. The length of time the child worked was recorded by E 1 using a stopwatch hidden from the child's sight. During the time the child worked, E 1 also recorded the child's problem-solving behaviors including all verbal utterances, directed and nondirected verbal bids for help, and nonverbal behaviors such as glances to an adult, and facial and bodily gestures. Also recorded was the target of the request. Observation continued until the 10 minute interval had elapsed. At this point, E 2 asked the child if she would like some help. Following the task children were also asked several questions to ascertain their reactions to help-seeking in general. Children were asked to indicate how they felt about having their bids for help rejected or ignored, about failing to ask for help when they know they need help, and about being offered help they do not need. Spontaneous responses to these questions were recorded verbatim and the children were also asked to rate their reactions on a seven-point scale ranging from 1(very unfavorable reaction) to 7(very favorable reaction).

So that children left the experimental situation feeling proud of their performance, they were told that because they caught on so quickly to the first problems they were given a very hard problem that is really meant for older children just to see how they would do. Children were told that they did very well on the hard problem compared to other children their age. Children were then asked to work one more block design similar to the practice designs in order to give them a final successful experience. After being asked not to talk to their classmates about the tasks until the other children had their turns, the children were thanked and escorted back to their classrooms.

Data Coding and Observer Agreement

In addition to the records of the child's task behavior made by E 1, the videotape record of each child's task behavior was coded by two independent raters, blind to the mastery-orientation of the children. The

raters observed the subject's videotaped performance on the experimental design and coded the child's task behavior until the 10 minute interval had elapsed. The interrater reliability for all measures was computed separately by evaluating percentage agreements.

Two independent raters coded the length of time each child persisted at the task. Task persistence was defined as the length of time that children stayed with the task before moving away, announcing that they had finished or wanted to stop. Inter-coder reliability for the persistence measure was 96.67%. Help-seeking behavior was defined as any verbal or nonverbal attempt on the part of the child to gain intervention, information, or assistance, from the experimenter beyond the standard task instructions. The raters coded children's verbalizations into categories of "TASK-FOCUSED" and "SELF-FOCUSED" help-seeking bids. The average inter-coder reliability across the two help-seeking categories was 95%.

The first category of help-seeking bids, TASK-FOCUSED, involved direct and explicit, verbal requests for information, resources, or assistance. Bids classified in this category have in common an explicit focus on the task. Questions or statements explicitly relating the subject's need for help, such as "Can you help me figure out how to make this pointy part", were coded in this category. Also, a child's comment was coded in this category if the comment pertained to a problem-solving strategy, such as, "Is that in a square, uh, how?," or "Does it have to be all red?" Also considered direct requests were statements in which the child wanted additional resources in order to work the puzzle, such as, "Do you have any more blocks?," or "Do I only use these blocks to make this?"

The second category of help-seeking bids, SELF-FOCUSED, consisted of nonspecific verbal bids. The bids classified in this category did not explicitly refer to need or request help and they did not identify specific resources or services needed. Verbal bids coded in this category shared a common focus on the subject's negative self-evaluation and affective state. A child's comment was coded in this category if the comment pertained to the child's perceived inability to solve the puzzle without intervention, such as, "I don't think I can do this one," or "This is a hard one for me." and were made before task disengagement.

Results

Preliminary examination of the data indicated that there were no significant differences in children's task persistence, help-seeking behaviors, and attitudes toward help-seeking as a function of the gender of the task experimenter (E 2). Therefore, data were pooled across this variable for further analyses.

Persistence

A 2(grade) x 2(mastery-orientation) analysis of variance (ANOVA) performed on persistence times revealed no significant main or interaction effects (all Fs < 1). Overall, children worked at the test puzzle for a long time (M=8.61 min.) into the allotted work period.

Help-Seeking

Overall, 107 bids for help were observed. The proportion of bids in each help-seeking category was calculated for each subject (See Table 1). A 2(Grade) x 2 (Mastery Orientation) x 2(Bidtype) ANOVA was conducted on these data with the last variable, Bidtype, as a within-subject factor. Unless otherwise reported degrees of freedom for all effects are 1 and 36.

There was a significant main effect for Bidtype, F=4.05, p=.05; and a significant Mastery Orientation x Bidtype interaction, F=5.87, p<.03. Overall, a higher proportion of children's bids were of the TASK-FOCUSED (M=.61) than of the SELF-FOCUSED (M=.39) type. This tendency to make TASK-FOCUSED bids was stronger, however, for girls in the high mastery orientation group (M=.74) than for girls in the low mastery orientation group (M=.48). Also as expected, older girls made more TASK-FOCUSED (m=.71) bids for help than did younger girls (M=.51); however, this difference fell short of statistical significance, F=3.17, p<.08.

---

insert Table 1 about here

Perception of Need and Desirability of Help

The majority of the children (77.5%) reported that they believed they would not solve the puzzle without some help and 85% of all children were willing to accept the adult's offer of help at the end of the work period. There were no differences in these responses by grade level or mastery orientation.

Table 2 presents children's mean ratings in response to the questions assessing their attitudes about receiving and seeking help. In general, children reported having unfavorable feelings about failing to ask for needed help, having their bids for help rejected, and being offered unneeded help. Ratings for each question were analyzed in separate grade x mastery orientation ANOVAs. There were no significant differences as a function of grade or mastery orientation in children's reported reactions to having their help-seeking bids ignored and rejected or in their reactions to receiving unsolicited offers of help that were not needed. Significant differences were found, however, by mastery orientation in children's attitudes about not asking for help in a problem-solving situation when they feel they need help, F=6.63, p<.01.

Girls high in mastery orientation reported more highly negative reactions (M=2.8) to this situation than did girls low in mastery orientation (M=3.6).

---

insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

The present study identified motivationally-based individual differences among girls that influence their help-seeking behaviors and attitudes in problem-solving situations. Specifically, differences in the degree to which girls assigned a causal role to their effort in producing achievement outcomes were associated with differences in help-seeking behavior. Furthermore, the fact that these individual differences in mastery orientation were not associated with differences in the length of time girls spent engaged with the difficult task highlights the necessity to look at how time is spent.

The present study provides clear evidence of important individual differences in girl's strategies for coping with stress (i.e., failure to make progress toward task solution) in a problem-solving situation. The preponderance of TASK-FOCUSED bids among the help-seeking behaviors of girls high in mastery orientation suggests that they were most concerned with ways to make progress on the task once they detected an obstacle to the goal. High mastery-oriented girls developed alternate plans of action that explicitly included making instrumental use of social resources in the methods for circumventing the obstacle. Consistent with this interpretation is the finding that girls characterized by high mastery-orientation toward achievement reported more strongly negative feelings about not actively seeking help to circumvent obstacles encountered in problem solving.

In contrast, this clarity in the explicit inclusion of other individuals in alternative plans to circumvent obstacles to problem solution was not evident in the help-seeking behavior of girls low in mastery-orientation. The help-seeking behavior of these girls in reaction to task difficulty reflected no clear-cut preference for actively seeking to obtain and apply means to overcome the difficulty they encountered. The girls in the low mastery oriented group appeared to be equally concerned with negative outcome expectancies and perceptions of a state of incompetence vis a vis the task Although girls low in mastery orientation did not often make direct requests or actively indicate that they needed help, they did perceive the need for help as often as the others, and they quite frequently reported wanting help before actually seeking help or receiving offers of help. It is clear from children's reports of their attitudes that failure to

perceive the need for help cannot account for the unwillingness of the children to actively seek help. Low mastery-oriented girls were aware of the need for help and would willingly accept an offer but would not always spontaneously solicit help.

The difference between the low and the high mastery-oriented groups is not simply explained by an absolute difference in the use of "internal" versus "external" resources. Either type of resource may be used productively or nonproductively. Self-monitoring, if it is concerned with negative outcome expectancies is no more conducive to learning and mastery than is soliciting unneeded help or not participating in any meaningful way in the solution process on a task with which a problem solver has sought help. Skilled learners show flexibility in selecting and adapting strategies to master problems encountered. In many informal, everyday learning settings and in formal classroom settings problem solving and learning are very much socially interactive enterprises, and sharing the cognitive load of problem solving with other individuals is most instrumental. The findings of this study, then, highlight the need to examine how and to what end children use internal resources (i.e., self-monitoring) and external resources (i.e., other persons) to help master tasks.

Based on the findings of previous studies (e.g., Nelson-Le Gall, 1987; Nelson-Le Gall & Jones, in press; Oppenheimer & Heller, 1984) it had been expected that the adaptive, mastery-oriented use of other individuals as resources in problem-solving would be more characteristic of the older than of the younger children in the study. The grade differences observed in the present study were in the expected direction, but did not attain an acceptable level of statistical significance. Failure to obtain statistically significant grade differences may be accounted for by limitations of the present sample in terms of the number and nature of subjects studied (i.e., the narrow age range of the sample; its homogeneity with respect to gender, achievement level, social class background). Thus, caution should be taken in generalizing the findings in the absence of further confirmatory data.

It is important to note that the data in the present study do not rule out gender-related influences on help-seeking behavior. Differences among girls in their goal orientation and help-seeking behavior may well be related to differences in their gender-role socialization histories and/or their internalization of gender-role stereotypes. It has been well documented that parents and teachers provide help readily to girls; that is, they appear to be willing to intervene at the slightest, most subtle sign of difficulty and may even take over the task for the child (Huston, 1983). These behaviors on the part of the adults both reflect and convey their expectations for girls' success in problem-solving and achievement tasks.

Provision of unnecessary help and failure to encourage continued involvement in the problem-solving process communicates low evaluations of the girl's competence. In addition, parents are more likely to focus on the interpersonal aspects of the teaching situation for girls rather than on the task and procedures for its accomplishment (Block, 1984). Because girls are quite susceptible to adult's negative evaluation of their task performance (e.g., Dweck & Bush, 1976), these communications may be particularly insidious because they are associated with debilitating motivational patterns (Dweck & Elliott, 1983). Girls who have internalized these expectations about when and how to seek help might exhibit a pattern of bids for help that would look very much like that exhibited by the girls in the present study who had a low mastery orientation to academic tasks. However, the present study did not measure subjects' degree of gender-role stereotyping or gender-role preferences, hence, the contribution of gender-role expectations to individual differences in help-seeking style can only be presented as speculation.

In conclusion, the contribution of the present study has been to highlight the conceptual constraints inherent in research that treats children's help-seeking behavior merely as a normative gender-related manifestation of dependency. The findings of this study suggest that to understand more fully children's help-seeking behavior, researchers must move beyond models that emphasize absolute gender differences in the prediction of help-seeking behaviors toward consideration of individual differences within gender groups. A more fruitful focus is likely to be found in studying variations in the goals that children pursue in achievement settings and in the means that children employ to achieve their goals. Future research should assess gender-role stereotyping, motivational orientation, and help-seeking along with other achievement strategies within groups of girls and boys. It will be important, also, to examine whether the relationships between children's gender role stereotyping, motivational orientation, and help-seeking behavior remain stable across childhood and adolescence.

References

Ames, R. (1983). Help-seeking and achievement orientation: Perspectives from attribution theory. In B. DePaulo, A. Nadler, & J. Fisher (Eds.), New directions in helping: Vol.2. Help-Seeking (pp. 165-186). New York: Academic Press.

Andrews, G., & Debus, R. (1978). Persistence and the causal perception of failure: Modifying cognitive attributions. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70, 154-166.

Block, J.H. (1984). Sex-role identity and ego development. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bottinelli, S., & Weizmann, F. (1973). Independence and locus of control orientation in children. Journal of Personality Assessment, 37, 375-381.

Cooper, C., & Cooper, R. (1984). Skill in peer learning discourse: What develops? In S. Kuczaj (Ed.), Discourse development (pp. 77-97). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Crandall, V. C., Katkovsky, W., & Crandall, V. J. (1965). Children's beliefs in their own control of reinforcements in intellectual-academic achievement situations. Child Development, 36, 91-109.

Deaux, K. (1976). The behavior of men and women. New York: Brooks Cole.

Diener, C., & Dweck, C. (1978). An analysis of learned helplessness: Continuous changes in performance, strategy, and achievement cognitions following failure. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36, 451-462.

Dweck, C., & Bush, E. (1976). Sex differences in learned helplessness: I. Differential debilitation with peer and adult evaluators. Developmental Psychology, 12, 147-156.

Dweck, C. & Elliott, E. (1983). Achievement motivation. In P. Mussen (Ed.), Handbook of child psychology: Vol. IV. Socialization, personality, and social development (pp. 643-691). New York: Wiley.

Feather, N. (1963). Persistence at a difficult task with alternative tasks of intermediate difficulty. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 66, 604-609.

Fischer, P., & Torney, J. (1976). Influence of children's stories on dependency, a sex-typed behavior.

Developmental Psychology, 12, 489-490.

Huston, A. (1983). Sex-typing. In P. Mussen (Ed.), Handbook of child psychology: Vol. IV. Socialization, personality,and social development (pp. 387-467). New York: Wiley.

Kohs, S. (1923). Intelligence measurement: A psychological and statistical study based upon the Block-Design Tests. New York: Macmillan.

McMullen, P. & Gross, A. (1983). Sex differences, sex roles, and health-related help-seeking. In B. DePaulo, A. Nadler, & J. Fisher (Eds.), New directions in helping: Vol. 2. Help-Seeking (pp. 233-263). New York: Academic Press.

Nelson-Le Gall, S. (1981). Help-seeking: An understudies problem-solving skill in children. Developmental Review, 1, 224-246.

Nelson-Le Gall, S. (1987). Necessary and unnecessary help-seeking in children. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 148, 53-62.

Nelson-Le Gall, S., & Jones, E. (1989). Cognitive and motivational influences on the help-seeking behaviors of black children. Child Development, 60,

Nicholls, J. (1984). Achievement motivation: Conceptions of ability, subjective experience, task choice, and performance. Psychological Review, 91, 328-346.

Oppenheimer, L., & Heller, J. (1984). Development of cooperation and help-seeking activities. In E. Staub, D. Bar-Tal, J. Karylowski, & J. Reykowski (Eds.), Development and maintenance of prosocial behavior. New York: Plenum.

Peterson, P., Wilkinson, L., Spinelli, F., & Swing, S. (1984). Merging the process-product and the sociolinguistic paradigms: Research on small-group processes. In P. Peterson, L. Wilkinson, & M. Hallinan (Eds.), The social context of instruction: Group organization and group processes (pp. 125-152). Orlando, FL: Academic.

Winterbottom, M. (1958). The relation of need for achievement to leraning experiences in independence and mastery. In J. Atkinson (Ed.), Motives in fantasy, action, and society (pp. 453-478). Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.

Table 1

Proportion of Help-Seeking Bids by Grade, Mastery Orientation, and Category

	Grade 4		Grade 6	
	Low	High	Low	High
Category	mastery	mastery	mastery	mastery
Task-Focused				
M	0.36	0.66	0.59	0.83
SD	0.46	0.30	0.37	0.21
Self-Focused				
M	0.64	0.34	0.41	0.17
SD	0.46	0.30	0.37	0.21

Table 2

Affective Reactions to Help-Seeking by Grade,

Mastery-Orientation, and Situation: Means and Standard Deviations

	Grade 4		Grade 6	
	Low	High	Low	High
Question	mastery	mastery	mastery	mastery
Fail to Ask				
M	3.70	3.20	3.40	2.50
SD	0.67	0.92	0.70	1.08
Bid Rejected				
M	2.20	1.60	2.10	2.40
SD	1.23	0.97	0.99	0.84
Unneeded Offer				
M	4.10	3.30	3.70	3.70
SD	1.73	0.82	1.49	0.95